

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE MOOS
TRACT, CENTEX PROPERTIES,
BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS**

by

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Abstract

In May, 2006, an archaeological survey was carried out at the 209-acre Moos Tract. Abasolo Archaeological Consultants conducted the 100% survey, in conjunction with Frost Geosciences. The parcel may be developed in the future by Centex Properties. Much of the Moos Tract consists of plowed fields, with brushlands on the west along Government Canyon Creek. Overall, there was little cultural evidence in the fields. However, site 41BX1676 was recorded in the field nearest the creek. The survey team found a number of diagnostic Archaic period projectile points, along with other artifacts and fire-cracked rock. On the west side of Government Canyon Creek, in a pasture used for deer-hunting, erosion along a roadbed exposed artifacts and fire-cracked rock. This site, 41BX1677, has been heavily collected in the past. It also has Archaic artifacts. Both sites are shallow and dispersed. No further archaeological work is necessary at the Moos Tract.

Introduction

Abasolo Archaeological Consultants conducted a Phase I archeological survey of the 209 acre Moos property along Galm Road in northern Bexar County (Fig. 1). The work was done under the aegis of Frost Geosciences at the request of Centex Properties and the City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Office. The assessment, which included a 100% surface inspection, was carried out by Harry Shafer, Thomas Hester, and Steve Frost in accordance with the "Archeological Survey Standards for Texas" in order to assess the significance of any cultural resources for possible nomination to National Register of Historic Places. The surface survey located two archaeological sites, 41BX1676 and 41BX1677. Both sites contained thinly scattered and shallow surface deposits making further investigations with backhoe testing unnecessary.

Background

The Moos tract is located north of Culebra Creek and is crossed, in the western portion, by the Government Canyon Creek, a northern tributary of Culebra Creek (Figs. 1 and 2). That part of the property east of Government Canyon Creek was in cultivation at the time of the survey. Segments of woodlands occur along the immediate creek valley and west of the creek, except for a fallow field near the west end (Fig. 2).

The soils in the eastern fields was mostly Lewisville silty clay (1-3% slope) heavily laden in places with Uvalde gravels. The Uvalde gravels, consisting mainly of Edwards chert, provided a ready supply of raw material for the production of chipped stone tools. Along the creek and on the west side of the creek the soils are of the Patrick association (PaA, 0-1% slope and PaB, 1-3 % slope) (Taylor et al. 1991). Uvalde Gravels also were scattered over the surface west of the creek. A large, abandoned gravel quarry was located in that vicinity.

Archaeological Setting

Regional chronology

Our knowledge of the archaeology of Bexar County is based on a record of almost 1700 archaeological sites found on the Texas Archeological Site Atlas (Texas Historical Commission and Texas Archeological Research Laboratory). Additionally, excavations at several dozen sites have provided insights into the nature of human utilization of the region since at least 11,500 years ago. West-northwest of the Moos Tract, Texas Parks and Wildlife has also done extensive research (McNatt et al. 2000).

The general chronological sequence in Bexar County is described as follows:

Paleoindian (11,500-8500 years ago), **Archaic** (8500-1500 years ago), **Late Prehistoric** (1500-400 years ago), and **Historic** (establishment of first European settlements, ca. A.D. 1700). Notable traits of the three prehistoric time periods include (Hester 2004):

Paleoindian: late Ice Age occupations, into the onset of modern climates; distinctive

spear points such as Clovis, Folsom, Golondrina and others (Turner and Hester 1993); small, mobile populations that first hunted now-extinct species of bison, elephant, and other animals, and by 10,000 years ago, fauna that are essentially of modern types. Archaic: growth of populations in the region, based on a systematic hunting and gathering way of life; large numbers of sites and a great variety of artifacts chipped from flint or chert (these are often time-specific spear point types that allow archaeologists to organize the Archaic into smaller temporal units); specialized earth-oven cooking technologies for much of the time period, resulting in burned rock middens (Black et al. 1997), a site type common in north Bexar County; Late Prehistoric: continuing hunting and gathering but with the introduction of the bow and arrow around A.D. 500-700, and a specialized pattern of buffalo hunting and processing seen in the Toyah culture in the last part of this period); Historic: arrival of the Spanish into Bexar County, especially after A.D. 1700, establishment of missions and ranchos; incursion of Comanche and Lipan Apache tribes not native to the area (1720-1750); and expanded Anglo-European farming and ranching activities in the 19th century that left distinctive stone buildings and other features.

Archaeology in the Survey Area

In the area around the Moos Tract, a number of archaeological surveys have been carried, most along Culebra Creek. The Culebra Creek valley has a well documented prehistoric record extending back to at least 10,000 years. The State of Texas Archeological Site Atlas shows that three archaeological sites, 41BX708, 711, and 712 are located along Culebra Creek upstream from the confluence with the northern tributary and on the south side of the creek approximately 1.5 kilometers west of FM 1560. Site 41BX708 has recently been partially excavated by the Southern Texas Archaeological Association (McKenzie and Moses 2005), and contains an archaeological record extending from early Historic Period times to about 10,000 years ago during Late Paleoindian times. Site 41BX1629, a Middle-Late Archaic site, is located just below the confluence of Government Canyon Creek with Culebra Creek (Shafer and Hester 2005a). Two archaeological sites were recorded in 1986 by C. K. Chandler (Texas Archeological Site Atlas) on the opposite side of Culebra Creek from 41BX1629 (Shafer and Hester 2005a). Both sites are characterized by burned rock middens. At site 41BX709, no artifacts were associated (based on surface examination) of the burned rock midden. However, at nearby site 41BX710, Chandler reported two burned rock middens that were largely buried. Local artifact collectors had dug indiscriminately into these deposits. Chandler was shown arrow points (of the Edwards type), corner tang bifaces (of Late Archaic age), as well as chipped stone bifaces, flakes, and deer bone. Finally, the excavations at site 41BX 126, located where Loop 1604 crosses Culebra Creek, revealed that it was extensively occupied from about 2,000 to 5,000 years ago (Nickels et al. 2001)

The Moos property was specifically considered as a high probability area for intact prehistoric archaeological sites because Government Canyon Creek, a northern tributary of Culebra Creek) cut through the property on the west side. The Culebra Creek drainage has been shown to be a very high probability landscape for archaeological sites. Notable is the Remuda Ranch survey (Shafer and Hester 2005b), where cultural materials

of ancient Native Americans ranged from 10,500 years ago to the early Historic period. Additionally, a number of early to mid 19th century farm and ranch complexes have been documented, including 41BX711 (at Remuda Ranch; Shafer and Hester 2005b), and 41BX1618 and 1619, on the Kallison Ranch development (Texas Archeological Site Atlas). Site types represented in the Moos Tract area (based on the Texas Archeological Site Atlas) include chert (flint) "quarries" (lithic procurement areas where raw materials were obtained and initially processed; e.g., 41BX721), burned rock middens (41BX1680, just to the north in the Schneider Tract; Shafer and Hester 2006b), rockshelters (41BX888), and open campsites (41ME38).

Survey Findings

Most of the property east of Government Canyon creek was in cultivation at the time of the survey, making surface inspection conditions ideal. The property west of the creek included both pasture land and a fallow field. The drought conditions that prevailed in the spring of 2006 also allowed for good surface visibility in this area as well. The survey team arbitrarily divided the property east of the creek into three sections for recording purposes-- Field 1, Field 2 and Field three (Fig.2). Field 1 was the easternmost while field 3 was the western most.

Field 1 and adjacent pasture. This field is at the eastern portion of the property; it and the wooded pasture at the east end contained a surface scatter of Uvalde Gravels. These gravels were especially dense near the western end of the field. Prehistoric exploitation of these resources was minimal, although a few flakes and cores were observed in the gravelly mix. Most of the fractured chert gravels were naturally fractured from land clearing and agricultural activities.

One interesting geological feature was noted in the pasture near the south end. This feature is a sink hole about 100 meters in diameter and about two meters deep. There is a slight berm around the feature and obvious drainages into it from all directions. A concentration of rounded limestone cobbles occurs in the sink hole which was dry at the time of the survey. It was apparent that the sink hole holds water for short periods of time. The perimeter and the area around the sink hole was inspected for archaeological materials, but none were found.

Field 2: The density of Uvalde gravels dropped off in Field 2, although they were still prominent (Fig. 4). The occurrence of flakes, cores, and other chipped stone artifacts (bifaces, and projectile points) increased toward the west end. The reason for the increase became obvious; site 41BX1676 extended into the southwestern sections of the field (Figs, 2, 5). The site is described below.

Field 3: Uvalde gravels were still prominent in this field. The southern end of field 3 yielded a scatter of chipped stone flakes, cores, bifaces, projectile points, and fire-cracked rock. Site 41BX 1676 extended into this field area (Fig. 6).

West of creek: The area west of the creek included an abandoned gravel quarry next to the creek, a fallow field, and pasture. Cultural material was generally scarce with the exception of a light concentration of chipped stone debris and fire cracked rock in the pasture at the west end of the property. This concentration was designated as 41BX1677, described in more detail below.

Prehistoric Archaeological Sites

Two prehistoric archaeological sites were recorded during the survey.

Site 41BX1676

This site is located in the plowed field along the eastern banks of Government Canyon Creek (Figs. 3, 5, and 6). The site is marked by a widely scattered lithic concentration consisting of chipped stone debris (flakes, cores, discarded bifaces), diagnostic chipped stone artifacts, and fire-cracked limestone rock. The fire-cracked rock was more prominent in the westernmost portions of the site, and in an area where chert debitage density decreased. The main artifact concentration which defines the site area is estimated to be about 300 meters southeast-northwest, and 200 meters southwest-northeast (Fig. 3). The UTM coordinates at what is roughly the site's center are: 525705 Easting, 3266438 Northing. Artifacts were also noted in the field beyond this area of concentration. Naturally occurring Uvalde Gravels consisting mostly of chert also litters the field both within and beyond the site confines. Excellent quality of Edwards chert cobbles were readily at hand for the prehistoric groups that camped along the stream. Immediately to the west of the site is a normally deep waterhole on Government Canyon Creek, almost dry at the time of the survey. Presumably something like this waterhole provided ready access to water for the site's inhabitants.

Several temporally diagnostic artifact types were recovered from the surface (Figs. 7, 8). Based on these temporally diagnostic artifacts (Turner and Hester 1993), which include a Guadalupe tool (Fig. 7A), a two possible Martindale points (Fig. 7B, C), a La Jita point (Fig. 7D), two Pedernales points (Fig. 7E, F), a Montell point (Fig. 7G), and an unidentified medial point fragment (Fig. 7H). Additional artifacts also were recovered; these include the distal end of an adze or celt (Fig. 8A), and several non-diagnostic bifacially chipped artifacts (Fig. 8B-G). It is our interpretation that the site was an Archaic hunter-gatherer camp intermittently used over a period of about 3,500 years, from, ca. 6,000 B.P. to about 2,500 B.P. (Hester 2004)

The cultural deposits were confined to the upper portion of a shallow Lewisville series soil mantle as shown by creek bank profiles. The site is very similar in structure to the eastern portion of 41BX1629 albeit with fewer fire-cracked rocks and less dense surface artifact scatter. A small burned rock midden also existed at 41BX1629, but no midden feature was present at 41BX1676. We do not recommend further work at this site for the following reasons: the cultural material is widely scattered; the deposits lack intrasite concentrations that might suggest spatial occupations of different ages; the deposits are

shallow; and the cultural components at the site are mixed as evidenced by artifacts widely different ages occurring on the same surface.

Site 41BX1677

This site is located on the second terrace above the floodplain and on a gravelly ridge west of the creek and at the west end of the property (Fig. 3). The site is currently in a wooded pasture. Archaeological evidence, exposed in a ranch road and eroded areas adjacent to it, consisted of clusters of fire-cracked rocks indicating the presence of ancient hearths (Fig. 9), chipped stone debris (flakes and cores), a biface fragment, and the base of a Pedernales type point (Fig. 11). The site area is estimated to be about 200 meters north-south and 100 meters east-west. The UTM coordinates are, on the ranch road near site center: E25528-255150. Discarded piles of flakes also indicate repeated surface collecting by relic hunters (Fig. 10), probably associated with the deer-hunting stands also located on the site. The Pedernales point indicates that at least one of the components represented at the site dates to the Archaic, between 2100-1000 B.C. (Turner and Hester 1993).

The cultural deposits are confined to the shallow soil mantle and surface. We do not recommend further work at this site for the following reasons: The deposits are shallow; the deposits lack stratigraphic integrity; the deposits are not concentrated.

Summary and Recommendations

The archaeological survey of the 209 acre Moos tract recorded two archaeological sites. The cultural deposits at both sites was thinly scattered and lacked contextual integrity. The sites were occupied during the Archaic Period. The surface indications at 41BX1676 consisted of a mixed component Archaic deposit dating from about 6,000 to 2,500 years before present. Site 41BX1677 probably had a similar occupation duration, but only one diagnostic artifact, a Pedernales point, was found on the heavily-collected surface. The significance of these findings is that the survey party was able to document the sites despite the fact that neither merits nomination as a state landmark. No further archaeological work is recommended for the Moos tract.

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Figures

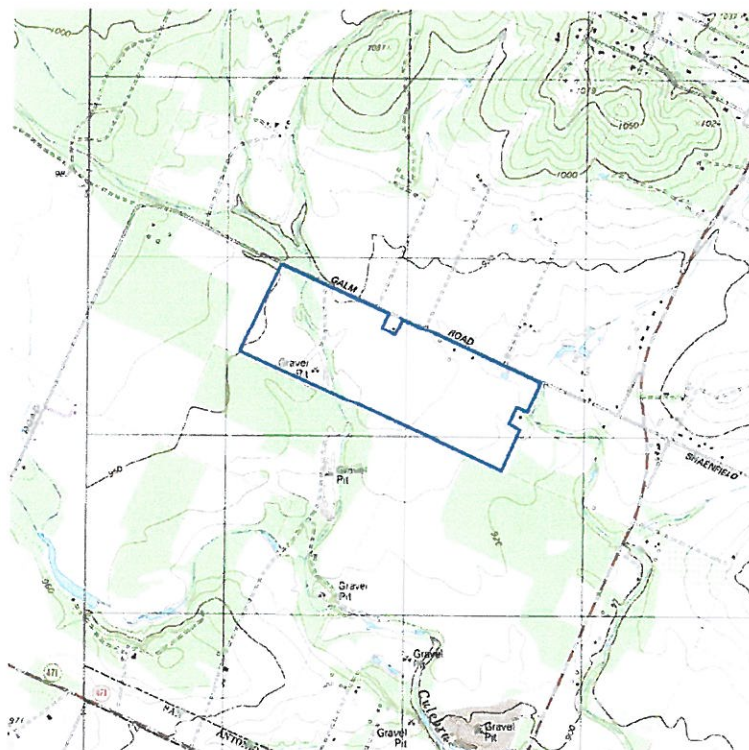


Figure 1. Topographic map of the Moos Tract. Image provided by Frost GeoSciences.

IMAGE RESTRICTED

Figure 2. Aerial view of the Moos Tract showing arbitrary survey units. Aerial provided by Frost GeoSciences.

IMAGE RESTRICTED

Figure 3. Aerial map of the project with the location of two newly recorded sites 41BX1676 and 41BX1677. Aerial provided by Frost GeoSciences.

IMAGE RESTRICTED

Figure 4. View of Field 2 looking west toward 41BX1676 (at distant tree line). Note the density of Uvalde gravels in the foreground.

IMAGE RESTRICTED

Figure 5. Site 41BX1676 looking east from Field 3 toward Field 2.

IMAGE RESTRICTED

**Figure 6. Site 41BX1676 looking west toward Government Canyon
Creek bottoms.**

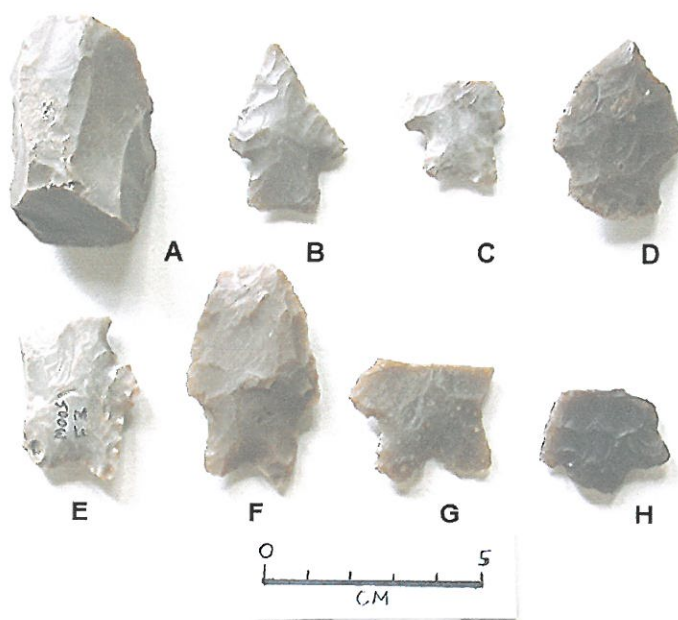


Figure 7. Site 41BX1676 artifacts. A, Guadalupe tool; B, C, Martindale-like points; D, LaJita point; E, F, Pedernales points; G, Montell point; H, medial section of a thin dart point.

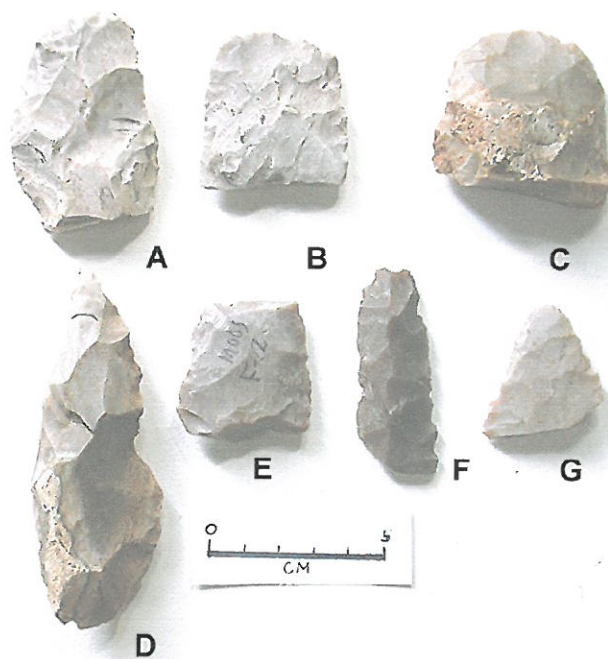


Figure 8. Biface artifacts from 41BX1676. A, Adze or celt; B-G, miscellaneous bifacially worked artifacts.



Figure 9. Surface scatter at 41BX1677 consisting of fire-cracked rock and chert artifacts.



Figure 10. Collectors discarded pile of chert flakes at 41BX1677.



Figure 11. Pedernales type projectile point.